DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 438 990 RC 022 318

TITLE	Charter Schools: Today. Changing the Face of American Education.
INSTITUTION	Center for Education Reform, Washington, DC.
ISBN	ISBN-0-9646028-1-4
PUB DATE	2000-00-00
NOTE	141p.; Contributors are Jeanne Allen, Angela Dale, Dave DeSchryver, Mary Kayne Heinze, and Christine Lynd. Special thanks is given to Thomas R. Healy.
AVAILABLE FROM	The Center for Education Reform, 1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 204, Washington, DC 20036 ($19.95 plus $3 shipping). Tel: 800-521-2118 (Toll Free).
PUB TYPE	Books (010) -- Information Analyses (070) -- Reports - Evaluative (142)
EDRS PRICE	Document Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Charter Schools; *Educational Change; Educational Practices; Educational Research; Elementary Secondary Education; Financial Support; *Nontraditional Education; Outcomes of Education; Parent Participation; *Politics of Education; Public Education; School Surveys; Small Schools
IDENTIFIERS	*Reform Efforts

ABSTRACT

This progress report reviews comprehensive research on the impact of the nation's charter schools on education and the education system. Chapter 1 looks at the "ripple effect" charter schools have on public schools. Charter schools' efforts to improve public education create new choices for parents. The competition causes public schools in areas with charter schools to accelerate systemwide school improvement to keep up. Ripple effects in 15 states are discussed. Of seven national and state studies, six studies demonstrate a positive ripple effect of charter schools on their peer districts; one does not. The second chapter examines obstacles and opposition to charter schools, which are divided into two categories: political opposition and operational hurdles. Chapter 3 presents charter school successes in 14 states that are examples of objective, verifiable academic achievement. More than 50 reports on the progress, success rates, and achievement of charter schools have been completed--over 80 percent show charter schools achieving their goals. The next chapter discusses charter schools that have closed and why, noting that only 2.3 percent have closed. The final chapter reports on a nationwide survey that focused on the operations, educational practices, successes, and challenges of 304 charter schools in 23 states and the District of Columbia. Key findings focus on small size, choice, chartering bodies, funding, facilities, and student diversity. Six appendices contain the national survey questionnaire, authorizing bodies for charter schools, funding information, location examples, a glossary, and a bibliography. (TD)

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